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Missiles

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum*

Contents

		Page
II.	Replies received from Member States	2
	France	2

* This reply was received after the submission of the main report.

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II. Replies received from Member States

France

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France, one of whose experts participated in the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Missiles in All Their Aspects, welcomes the fact that the work begun by the Panel in 2002 can be pursued and deepened during the three meetings planned for 2004. France would particularly like the discussions to result in substantive recommendations addressed to the Secretary-General. In that spirit, France associates itself with the reply given by Ireland on behalf of the European Union and forwarded to the Secretariat on 25 June 2004, and would like to add the following comments:

Even though General Assembly resolution 58/37 calls for consideration of all categories of missiles, irrespective of their range or carrying capacity, France feels that a distinction must be drawn between ballistic and cruise missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, the proliferation of which constitutes a threat to international peace and security, and other categories of missiles which should rather be the focus of reflection on the balance of conventional forces within a different context.

With regard to delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), France is of the view that the issue of their acquisition should be divorced from that of their export. Generally, the acquisition of missiles that can deliver WMDs (whether manufactured locally or imported) takes place within a specific regional context. The choice often depends on the degree to which the security environment is perceived to have degraded in terms of regional tensions, political instability and other factors.

Issues relating to exports of missiles or related sensitive goods and technology, however, go far beyond the regional framework and should therefore be addressed internationally. They require also that the major missile manufacturing and exporting countries should behave responsibly when it comes to exports. France notes in this regard that a large number of such countries have acceded to the missile technology control regime and signed the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (the Hague Code of Conduct).

In this regard, while recognizing the right of each country to choose the appropriate means for its defence, France has been watching closely the proliferation activities of certain countries which are exporting missiles capable of delivering WMDs and pursuing programmes that potentially jeopardize the security of their neighbours, if not other regions of the world. France further notes with concern the growing and unprecedented role that certain clandestine non-State networks seem to be playing in the acquisition of ballistic capabilities. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) raises these issues and institutes measures for addressing them.

In addition to export controls, which are essential, France would like to stress the importance of confidence-building and transparency measures which must be deepened where they exist and instituted where they are lacking, particularly at the regional level. France also supports universal adherence to the Hague Code of

Conduct and the transparency measures which it entails, such as pre-launch notifications on ballistic missile and space launch vehicle launches and annual declarations on ballistic missile and space launch vehicle programmes. Similarly, more States should register with the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms which reports annually on transfers of missiles and space launch vehicles, in particular.

Other confidence-building measures focusing specifically on missiles within a regional context can also be envisaged, such as voluntary limits on range/payload, moratoriums on test flights, launch notifications for neighbouring States or those directly affected by States that have yet to sign the Hague Code of Conduct, and decisions to separate the warhead from the missile body. These confidence-building measures could be accompanied by voluntary reciprocal verification mechanisms as needed and in accordance with modalities to be worked out. Such measures might more readily be applied in the case of verification of conventional warheads on operational missiles.

Lastly, France would like to underscore the irreplaceable role that the United Nations Security Council plays when international peace and security are endangered by the proliferation of WMD delivery systems. This is why France believes it important to maintain within the Organization, and at the disposal of the Security Council, the competencies which the United Nations Special Commission established pursuant to Security Council resolution 687 (1991) (UNSCOM) and, later, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), acquired in the area of missiles and drones, competencies which could be useful in dealing with future international crises involving the possession of missiles.